

Interviewee: Freda Hawver-Pachter (Two gay moms and two gay dads, name is a combination of her moms' last names)

Interviewer: Jessica Higgins

[Intro and consent] *So, your last name is Hawver-Pachter, can you tell me the background behind your family and how that came about?* So I have two moms and two dads. My moms are lesbians and my dads are gay. Basically my moms are my legal guardians and my dads, I see them all the time, but they're not... They don't have any legal claim to me. And my family didn't originally intend for my dads to have so much presence in my life, but it just ended up being that way, since my parents - my biological mom and my biological dad went to college together and they're friends, so that's just how it ended up happening. And my moms decided before I was born that they would, that I would take both of their last names, just because they love each other and it's like an equal thing, and I guess traditionally people take their father's last name, but since they didn't think my father would be such a huge part of my life they didn't really consider that at all, ever. So, because I guess they just assumed he would be a sperm donor that I saw every so often. So yeah, that's my family background. I have a brother who comes from same dad but different mom, and he also has the same last name as me. It's Hawver Pachter with a space and not a hyphen, which can get really confusing, especially for the college board, who doesn't really understand spaces not hyphens. So they never send me my scores, because it's really confusing for them.

*So your brother has the same dad, but different mom, and he still has the last names of your moms? The Hawver Pachter part, just without the hyphen?* Yeah, I am the product of my biological mother, Tammy, and he's the product of my other mom, Staci. So, yeah, it makes sense.

*So the feminist part of this would be that neither of your moms was willing to give up their last names, so they just combined them together. Ok, cool! When they came up with the last name, was there any consideration about how important the name sounded? Like - [laughs] Hawver-Pachter, Pachter-Hawver. I don't know, I never really asked them that. I guess, I don't know, I always thought it was that way because they were just considering the alphabet, and "h" just came before "p." I don't know, I kind of like the way that it's arranged, because it allows for all kinds of possibilities! The HP printer, Harry Potter... I sometimes call myself Freda Harry Potter. [laughs] Don't tell anyone that. [lots of laughter and joking]. Yeah, so, I kind of like the way it is, but I never asked them about order or how it sounded. Um... that would be interesting, to ask them that though.*

*Do you know if either of their names had any sort of family history that was really important to them, and they didn't want to lose that family history?* I don't know, it's complicated, I think, because my mother, whose last name is Hawver (her name is Staci), she, her grandfather had a huge project before he died, which he passed on to my grandfather, of finding all the Hawvers ever. And they got pretty far, and it's like a huge deal on that side of the family. And for that reason, I doubt that my mom would ever want to drop the last name just because it's like almost become a tradition. I'm sure one of my uncles will have to continue that some time when my grandpa isn't around anymore. But for that reason I'd guess my mom wouldn't want the last name to be dropped. My other mom, however... My grandma still has the last name Pachter even though she divorced and remarried to my grandpa Bill Winn. So my mom still carries the last

name Pachter, and I don't know, I'm kind of surprised my grandma still does; I wouldn't have thought. So I don't know what that whole thing is - the Pachter thing. I've talked to my grandpa Herv Pachter all the time, but I don't know. It's going to be complicated when I have to name my children, because I'm not dropping my last name.

*So that's actually one of the next questions. If you plan on getting married and having children - this is obviously far in the future - but what do you think some of your options are?* It's going to be really difficult. I remember listening to an NPR piece on this a couple months ago, and it's like, really what am I going to do? If my husband isn't willing to drop his last name, then my kids are going to have probably THREE names. If I marry another hyphenated person, THAT'S a disaster! So it's going to have to be... I don't know, maybe we'll just make up a new name, that'd be kind of cool. Or like, I don't know... Because I wouldn't want to drop either name, just for sake of my mothers' feelings, and also I would not know which name to drop, and I don't know. I don't consider myself an avid feminist, but I just don't like the idea of having to get rid of part of my identity to be married to another person. I mean, there's also the idea that like... I've never really had a strong urge to get married, just because my parents were denied the right for so long, I never really thought it made a difference in how I was raised, or anything like that, so I never really had a strong urge to get married. [laughs] I always told my parents I'd have a love celebration instead of a marriage celebration. Because I like the idea of a wedding celebration, but I didn't actually want to have the legal status of being married. And I know a lot of straight couples who aren't married too and they seem to be doing just fine. So there's that. I don't think I would ever.. Even if I did get married, because, I mean, chances are I'll meet someone who really wants to get married, and I won't be able to say "No, I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you, but I'm not marrying you because... Whatever." So chances are I'll probably have to get married, and that issue won't come up, but I don't know, I've never considered it that much before, just because of my parents.

*So with having kids, a lot of the time what people do is that even if the mother and father keep their own last names, the child will end up just taking the father's last name. So how do you feel about that? Would that be insulting to you?* Um... I don't think it would be insulting to me. I know a family that's like that, that are really close family friends. We call them the Berliners, even though the mom, Sherry, who I used to work for, she kept her last name, which is Evans, and the kids both have the last name Berliner. From that, I really don't think it makes a huge difference, I don't think it makes her any less their mom. I think she just wanted to keep her last name because it sounds better than Berliner, and she's like, her career is fashion. And also probably because for the same reasons, like I wouldn't just... I have a personal connection to the last name. I don't know, I don't think I would be offended, unless it was a super ugly last name. But I don't know. I guess it would be kind of weird, but I don't think I would be offended. If it makes it easier to deal with the whole last name situation, like I really don't want... An unhyphenated two last name is hard enough for me, I don't want them to have three hyphenated or unhyphenated last names. That would just be terrible. [laughs] I don't want to bring that upon my children.

*So for you, the connection to the last name is it's part of your identity, but it's not necessarily that you feel like it has to be passed on into the next generation. Yeah. Ok. Let's see... So the next section is pros and cons of your parents' decision to combine their last names. So have there been any unforeseen consequences? Like has their last naming practice made things kind of difficult in terms of legal documentation or anything like that?* I don't think... Yeah. Definitely

for the college board thing. [Repeat of college board discussion; always the "name thing"] That's really the only issue I've ever encountered. Usually the last name helps with telling people about my family, because then they kind of get it. They're like, "Oh! That's why you have two last names!" But other than that, I don't think... My mom usually deals with that stuff. And I think it's kind of good for sure that we have both last names because sometimes going through airport security, like when I was littler, you needed to prove that you weren't smuggling children, and a lesbian couple is not a usual situation for like, I don't know, for people to deal with. So they needed my birth certificate and all that stuff, and I think it's definitely - it made it a lot easier that I had both of their last names instead of just one, because then they're like "Who's that woman? How do we know she isn't a child smuggler?" That was always annoying, like my moms always had to bring more documents for me and my brother. But I think that was more "lesbian couple" thing, and I think the double last name helped with that.

*So it was actually useful for you in some cases? Yeah. So you always go by Hawver-Pachter, you and your moms, you never go by just Hawver or just Pachter, like it's always together. Yeah...* Since my dad pays my phone bill, because I'm on his family plan, he will put me as Freda Leech, which is his last name, and, I don't know, sometimes for simplicity, because I don't know if AT&T can deal with that. [laughs] But um, other than that I always go by Hawver Pachter, no matter what, so...

*I'm guessing that your parents would say that they would make the same choice again. Yeah. What kinds of reactions have you and your parents gotten about the last name? Not very many negative... I just know, like, kind of, acknowledgement of anything weird, just because of where I grew up. Especially my K-8 school. There were at least five other lesbian and gay couples in my class of 36 people, so it was fairly common. Actually, now that I'm thinking about it, none of those couples joined their last names. That is strange.*

*So what did they do, they just picked one of them? Yeah, they just picked one of them.* [describes friends from the situation]. Wow, I never thought about that before. But I feel like I do know a lot of other people with hyphenated last names. [describes another friend] I think it was just, everyone was kind of used to it where I was from, and then when I got to high school, it was just like, nobody really cared enough to ask. Sometimes people get confused and think I'm introducing myself by my full name, like my middle name is Hawver and my last name is Pachter, and I'm like, "whoah there."

*So just in terms of how effective your parents were in preserving their last names, how effective do you think it was? Because you've already expressed concerns about what you're going to do when you get married - if you get married - if you have children. The name might not be preserved, so was the effort worth it? On their parts, to preserve their last names? Yeah, I don't really know how concerned they were about my legacy, or their legacy, but I definitely think if I don't choose to give my children my last name, like if I decided to change it to something altogether different than what my partner is or what I am, I think my brother would probably want to keep it for sure, he is that way, he would not want to change anything. He would want his children to have his last name. So there's that. Also.. I don't know if my parents - I mean, I have expressed so many alternative views on many things, so I really don't think they would be that surprised [laughs]. And even if I did choose that they'd probably want me to think about it a little more, and just be like... I don't know what they would say, but they always want me to make really well informed and well thought about decisions. So they would probably tell me more about that stuff. I don't think they would be that upset, just because it wouldn't be a*

surprise, and, I mean, it's just like in the family history. My grandma didn't change her last name when she got remarried, even though it was a bloody divorce, that kind of thing. I don't think people really put much stock in last names on my biological mother's side of the family. My other mom's side of the family... Probably more. So she would probably have different things to say about that. But I don't really know what they would be. [wrap up interview, thank Freda for her time]